

# I. Introduction

This Record of Decision (ROD) addresses the proposed improvements to Colorado Forest Highway 80, Guanella Pass Road (also known as Park County Road 62, Clear Creek County Road 381, and Forest Development Road 118). Guanella Pass Road is approximately 72 kilometers (45 miles) west of the Denver metropolitan area. It begins at U.S. Highway 285 in Grant, Colorado, and proceeds in a northerly direction over Guanella Pass, ending at the south edge of Georgetown, Colorado. Figure I is a map showing the location of Guanella Pass Road with respect to the City of Denver, Colorado. The roadway is 38.3 kilometers (23.7 miles) in length with the southern 17.2 kilometers (10.7 miles) in Park County and the northern 21.0 kilometers (13.0 miles) in Clear Creek County. Approximately 1.1 kilometers (0.7 miles) of the Clear Creek County portion is within the Georgetown town limits. The road passes through the Pike-San Isabel and Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forests and is used primarily for recreational purposes (90 percent of traffic). The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has proposed this project in cooperation with the Forest Service (FS), Park County, Clear Creek County, the Town of Georgetown, and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). The FHWA is the lead agency. The FHWA plans to begin implementing the project in 2003.

Guanella Pass Road, as it exists today, is an accumulation of the construction and maintenance efforts of six entities including Park County, Clear Creek County, the FS, the Town of Georgetown, Xcel Energy, and the former Geneva Basin Ski Area. The last major construction work was completed in the early 1960s. The proposed project is included in the Colorado State Transportation Improvement Program. Currently, 48 percent of the road is surfaced with aged pavement or chip seal. The remaining 52 percent of the road has a dirt or gravel surface. Guanella Pass Road is maintained by Park County, Clear Creek County, and Georgetown. In 1990, Guanella Pass Road was designated a Colorado Scenic and Historic Byway by the CDOT, and in 1991 Guanella Pass Road was designated a National Forest Scenic Byway.

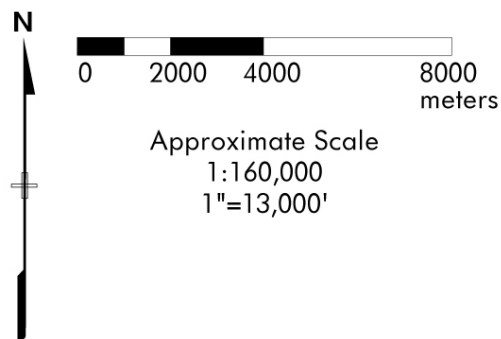
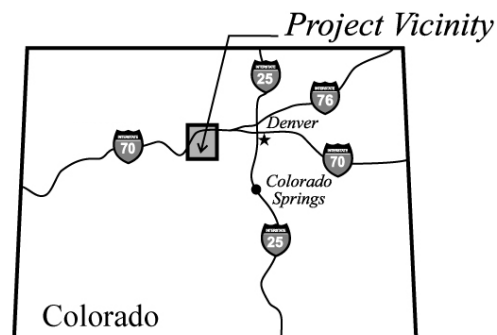
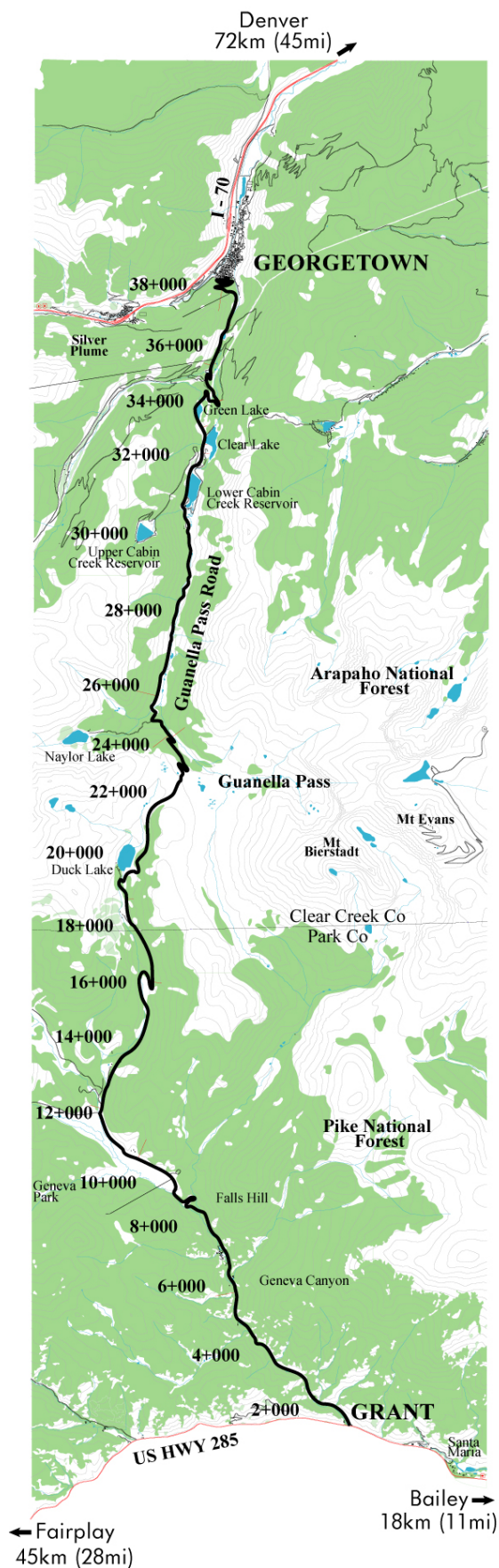
The purpose of the Guanella Pass Road improvement project is shaped by the need to balance transportation needs (including recreational access to FS lands) and roadway maintenance needs with the sensitive nature of the environment. Table 1 presents eight project objectives that describe the purpose of the project. The objectives were developed based on the needs identified by the FHWA, FS, and CDOT with input from the local agencies (town and counties) and the public.

An extensive public and agency involvement process was completed for the Guanella Pass Road improvement project. This scoping process identified the following six key issues for this project:

- Social Environment
- Water Resources
- Visual Quality
- Recreational Resources
- Plants and Animals
- Construction Impacts

Social Environment includes community character, traffic volumes, population and demographics, the local economy, cultural (historical and archaeological) resources, and





**Figure 1**  
**Guanella Pass Road**  
**Vicinity Map**

*Table 1: Objectives of the Guanella Pass Road Improvement Project*

<b>Transportation</b>
I. Provide a roadway width and surface capable of accommodating year 2025 traffic volumes.
II. Improve safety by providing consistent roadway geometry and providing reasonable protection from unsafe conditions.
III. Accommodate and control access to Forest Service facilities located along the road.
<b>Maintenance</b>
IV. Reduce the anticipated maintenance costs to the counties and town maintaining the road.
V. Repair roadway drainage problems.
<b>Environment</b>
VI. Repair existing unvegetated slopes.
VII. Avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse impacts to the environment by considering key issues identified through the public and agency involvement process.*
VIII. Maintain the rural and scenic character of the road.
<i>* Key Issues for this project were identified as: Social Environment, Water Resources, Visual Quality, Recreational Resources, Plants and Animals, and Construction Impacts.</i>

traditional cultural properties. Water Resources include water quality, wetlands, riparian communities, and other waters of the U.S. Visual Quality includes views from the road and views of the road. Recreational Resources include recreational activities on FS lands, pedestrian activities, and cycling. Plants and Animals include threatened, endangered, and sensitive (TES) species of animals and plants as well as non-TES animal species. Construction Impacts include noise, vibration, traffic delays, congestion, and material hauling resulting from construction activity. Objective VII of this project is to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse impacts to the environment by considering these key issues identified through the public and agency involvement process.

Improvements under the build alternatives lie within the existing Guanella Pass Road corridor. Roadway realignments outside the existing road corridor were considered but eliminated from detailed consideration in the *Colorado Forest Highway 80, Guanella Pass Road, Final Environmental Impact Statement* (FHWA 2002) (FEIS). Six alternatives were analyzed in detail in the FEIS for the Guanella Pass Road project. Each of the alternatives includes improvements to the horizontal and vertical alignment, drainage, structural stability, small-stream crossings, road width, culverts, and roadside cut and fill slopes. Improvements to the roadway width include widening the road where necessary to create a consistent width and to provide a travel lane and shoulder in each direction. Parking areas along the road will be formalized with definitive boundaries. The roadway will be resurfaced. Major construction items will include excavation of material sources, clearing and grading, slope and subgrade stabilization, drainage improvements, retaining walls, revegetation, placement of crushed aggregate base and driving surface, parking area and walkway construction, signs, striping, guardrail, and other safety related features necessary to meet current design practice. Maintenance of the road is and will continue to be the responsibility of the counties and the Town of Georgetown. All construction items will conform to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

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